



Episode 7 – Master Liza Jost | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone and welcome to episode 7 of [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). My name is Jeremy Lesniak your host for the show and also the president of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. On today's show, we have Master Liza Jost, a Taekwondo practitioner from Vermont but now living and studying abroad. Master Jost and I had a great chat and I appreciated her fitting me into her schedule. She was in Thailand at the time of her interview and took a break from her final schedule to talk to me. Here it is, Master Jost welcome to [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com).

Liza Jost:

Thank you so much for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm excited to have you here. You know I'm gonna learn a lot about you today which is kinda fun I mean we don't know each other that well so that's kinda neat and I'm looking forward to it.

Me too, let's get started.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. So why don't you tell us a little bit about how you got started in the martial arts and when and where and all that.

Liza Jost:

Okay sure. I grew up in Vermont in Lamoille County it's a really small place and when I was eight years old my dad sat me down on our porch and he looked at me and he said you know you're gonna have to learn to defend yourself you're going out there and you're gonna be a girl and it's always gonna be harder for you and I'm just gonna put you in martial arts and I was like I had no idea what that meant you know being eight years old and I was like oh it sounds really fun and we went and I started Dunlavey's Black belt academy which was in Morrisville, Vermont and I mean we've, I've trained a lot under other united instructors in the area like Master Yordan, Master [00:01:44.23] and GM [00:01:46.11] but [00:01:48.09] my home has been in at the Morrisville Vermont studio and then it branched out into New Port later but my brother and I started and when we were really little kids and when you're at that age it's just really fun time, it's just somewhere to go and have fun and you make your friends and I didn't really appreciate martial arts I think for what it brought me in so much later.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think that's pretty typical, I started a little bit younger than you and I had no idea what was going on till I was at least I didn't even have a semblance of what was going on until I was probably 12 or 13.

Liza Jost:

Yeah same.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, but you know that's okay I think we all go through that.

Liza Jost:

No, I loved it. Yeah, we had trampolines in the studio at one point I can distinctly remember.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh wow.



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Liza Jost:

Those little mini ones from the 90s.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, I wish I had trampolines. That would be great well cool so let's jump in to the what some consider the big question here, your best martial arts story, will you tell us one?

Liza Jost:

Hmm well yeah this is kind of a difficult question for me because after 17 years of training I think like I was just saying martial arts is more of a feeling of what it's giving me like a sense of community and to pick all those little times you know out of all those countless hours at the studio and at tournaments it's really hard so I was asking my martial arts friends my best friends who I trained with for years and they were like tell the story about your shoulder and I was like oh men. It's a rough story, I have dislocated my shoulder 8 times and I had 2 surgeries to saw it back together.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, how did that happen?

Liza Jost:

So yeah, the first time we were in New Hampshire at a quite a different style than I was used to. I mean we've always competed outside our circuit but not really that far. It was one of the furthest ones for me and there's a lot of different styles you know when with being from a small world community, you often compete against more or less the same people and kinda know their style and it was a really great opportunity to get out of that comfort zone and to grow but at the same time I wasn't expecting certain things and we were spying for the Grand Champ match and it was 5 point match and I was up I think 2 or 3 to 1 and I just kept throwing these like sidekicks in the chest just off the front foot and she just kept walking into them so I kept throwing them and next thing I know is she grabs my foot with both hands and I remember this distinctly and she just throw with me backwards and my foot's in midair and I know there was a judge thing behind me because what they were sitting in in four corners in the four corners [00:04:59.17] standing and I knew there was a judge a corner judge so I put out my right arm thinking he would catch me and the next thing I remember I blacked out and I had to have the rest of the story filled in [00:05:16.23] cause I just blacked out next thing I remember I was sitting on the ground with my legs crossed and I was holding my arm, my right arm with my left hand thinking like who is screaming, I'm in the middle of a match stop screaming and I realized it was me, it was me screaming and they stopped the match and they asked me if I can continue and I'm like no get Master D, get Master D and Master D



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comes over and the paramedics come over and the guy right away like Master D right away slings up my arm with my belt and the paramedic tells me that I've broken my shoulder the whole shoulder blade in the back that it was just in a big knot and I was just like oh my mom's gonna kill me. I think I was 16 or 17 years old so that's what I kept thinking in the ambulance oh my mom's gonna kill me and we're at the hospital and the paramedics tell the nurse that I've broken my shoulder blades and she looks at it right away and says no no no you're fine stop crying and my friends and Master D was standing there like obviously something's wrong and it took four hours in an x-ray before they realize it was dislocated the whole time which is really what caused all the problems because with a dislocated shoulder if you put it back in right away it's usually fine but they finally put it back in and gave me some pain killers and I slept on the back seat of my car the whole like 6 hour drive home whatever but and it just kept coming out unfortunately because you know as an athlete you just wanna get right back into it, it was the middle of tournament season I was like oh I'll be fine, I'll be fine. It was just it just kept coming out of doing stupid things like we were one of my friends and I we were playing a like a game with foam noodles [00:07:18.09] and I raised my arm up too quick and it came right out and another tournament same thing I just I did a back fist too fast and it came out and stupid other things like when I was at college in Canada I just slipped on some ice and grabbed the handle of the cab I was getting out of with my right arm it came out and the last time before I decided to have a surgery it came out in my sleep so.. yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's rough.

Liza Jost:

But at that point I could put it back in by myself after the third time I could put it back in by myself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I was wondering was it painful to put it back in?

Liza Jost:

Oh, the thing that dislocated shoulders is once it really sucks while it's out but as soon as it's back in the relief is instant and then it's just sore and so I knew it so I had to like psyche myself up like oh you gotta do it, you gotta do it, you gotta do it lift my arm up and it slide back in and yeah so

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm cringing



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Liza Jost:

Yeah yeah it was crazy and then I had the first one and I was still competing for a while and it was fine but I mean I wasn't training or competing nearly as much I was away at school and then I moved to Germany later after I graduated and I was lying in bed and I was brushing my hair before bed and it came out again after 2 years and I was just like no. So yeah, a few years ago I had another shoulder surgery and

Jeremy Lesniak:

How long ago was that?

Liza Jost:

3 years ago, now

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay

Liza Jost:

Yeah, so

Jeremy Lesniak:

And has it been good since?

Liza Jost:

Yeah now I have 5 metal or 5 plastic hooks in my shoulder that are like have sawed the ligament back on to the bone.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. You're bionic,

Liza Jost:



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Kind of but it's I'm lucky because they're plastic hooks so I don't like set off the metal detector when I go to the airport.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well good that's pretty intense what is there a take away for you with that, if something you would have done differently and I don't just mean in that specific moment because you know hindsight there is always 20 20 you wouldn't have put your arm out, but would you have done something different in your training?

Liza Jost:

I think with these sorts of injuries it's when you're an athlete especially like when I was at that age, when I was you know in my last years of high school I was really serious about competing and training and I was at the studio almost every day and you just kind of don't wanna accept the doctor's advice that you need to like not move it at all for 6 weeks because it feels better I mean I think you know it's fine it's fine. I mean a lot of it had to do with how it came out like the direction it came out like down and forward instead of to the side like most do so the muscles were really torn and I just kind of didn't wait as long as I should've. I don't know and now like I can't play I could never be a baseball pitcher not that I ever was but it just it doesn't go back as far as my left shoulder. Like I can't play tennis or anything with a racket basically and my sparring career is kind of over unfortunately I'm not allowed to competitively spar but technically I'm not supposed to train anymore at all but I mean I think surgeons have to tell you that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure

I think they have to tell you to

Jeremy Lesniak:

So clearly, you're ignoring that advise.

Liza Jost:

Yeah, well I don't get to train nearly as much as I want to anymore and I am really careful especially like even just you know training sparring in the studio now I think after like having to go through combine the year's worth of physio therapy and stuff it kinda hits you like okay I could've avoided [00:11:34.17] if



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I had like paid attention but it hasn't really helped me back from continuing on in Taekwondo it just made me a different type of martial artist let's say.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay so maybe that even is a good dovetail into our next question. How has the martial arts made you a better person?

Liza Jost:

Yeah it's hard to explain to people who have never done martial arts before but I think this podcast just mean we're gonna reach within the community which is awesome because they're gonna know right away when I say the greatest gift in martial arts has given me is my Taekwondo family and I think that being an athlete is one thing you know like I was just saying being someone who loves to compete and loves to go to tournaments is one thing but this emotional bond between your fellow martial artists and all of the support that comes with that is the most important thing to me and now that I live abroad I mean no matter how long it's been whenever I go home I'm still welcomed back just like right into the family which is so great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah martial arts is a family that you, you never leave when you know I think sometimes it's harder to get rid of your martial arts family than your biological family, get rid of is the wrong verb but I think you know what I mean it's you have them often times in a tighter hold because of the time that you spent with them and what you're doing when you are with them.

Liza Jost:

Yeah and I mean like you support each other in a different kind of way than with your other family or your friends because you all are reaching towards similar personal goals and you're all going through similar personal trials and that creates a connection you know that a lot of people just don't understand otherwise I think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, so let's talk about how the martial arts has helped you through some rough stuff, tell me about a low point in your life.

Liza Jost:



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I'm gonna talk about something besides my shoulder because I don't think that was so much of a low point in my life, I was kind of more annoyed by it really and it's gonna sound incredibly stereo typical but one of the lowest times in my life is in a lot of young teenage girls lives so I don't think I was a teenager anymore but you know a young girl [00:14:14.19] I went to this really bad break up and it was the first time any boy had ever broken up with me and it just kind of just shattered my you know myself worth at the time and which is you know I mean looking back it was kind of silly because as an adult

Jeremy Lesniak:

But in that moment, I mean there are a lot of things that looks silly when we look back on them you know as we grow perspective changes but in that moment that thing whatever it is just feels so huge and so daunting so how did your martial arts background help you move through a place where you could look back on it and laugh?

Liza Jost:

Yeah well, I think doing like exercising training any sort of physical activity is the best thing anyone can do after a break up especially if you were the one getting dumped because it's not only a distraction but it also makes you feel better about yourself and when you reach or conquer small goals and you get your self-confidence back and Taekwondo is and martial arts in general is even better I think. I think it's the best cure for any sort of break up because you can take out all of that anger and that frustration and actually hit things.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, yeah hopefully you're not taken too much of it out on your friends and your family in the studio.

Liza Jost:

No, I think what we did the day it happened we went to the studio and I'm like we had all these little dragon boards you know the really small tiny boards that you can break when you like squeeze your wrists together just [00:15:59.19]and I think we just lined them up and we're like and my friends were there and we just like broke I don't know 20 or 30 of them just you know yelling and letting out your anger and then I had a good cry on the mat which is

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome



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Yeah and then you get this sense of achievement too I think from facing this depression or this you know this low point and facing it head on and really just doing something physical I think it gives you a serious achievement and it just I mean now I look back and I'm almost thankful that that happened because it really made me grow as a person and you know like I said I could just go cry on the mat in the studio because the studio is like I think for a lot of people it's my safe place, it's my happy place, and it's my second home and that's where I wanna be when I'm feeling low.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Liza Jost:

I can't know how I could say anything to sum that up better that's fantastic and yeah, I think most of us had had personal experiences that mirror not just the let's call it the problem there but the solution I know of people that have dealt with more chronic depression issues that have been helped by the martial arts so thank you for sharing that.

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Name somebody other than your primary instructors, that's been really influential in your martial arts career.

Liza Jost:

Like I mentioned in the beginning I thought I have one primary instructor we have a big I'm lucky I'm really lucky to have a close knit group of instructors in the area in the Vermont area who are excellent instructors whom I've trained there a lot and there are also a really important part of my Taekwondo family on my martial arts growth but if I had to pick one person I'd say who really is very special to me besides my friends and my colleagues and my instructors I have to choose Master Hellen Dunlavey I mean like though she's one of my instructors now she came into my Taekwondo life somewhat late, later than a lot of the other people I've mentioned and I consider her a second mom a confidante like a friend and someone who has advice I greatly value and we keep in touch to this day even though I'm gone and I just love her to death so if you're listening Hellen I love you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, what tell us a little bit about what Hellen's done for you I mean you kinda gave us some top down stuff but how has she helped you in the martial arts? I mean that could be an example or you could just tell us some more stuff about her that's been helpful you know.



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Liza Jost:

I think anybody who knows Hellen knows that she's a really strong person and I think the only aspect of her personality that's greater than her personal strength is her kindness and her capacity to love people and it's this unconditional love combined with the ability to tell you that you know like get your stuff together, that makes her such an amazing person to know and I remember one day we were teaching I think a women's class in Morrisville together quite recently last time I was home in Vermont, it was like 2 years ago and we had some time to kill so we just went to a cafe and had coffee and I just told her all of the things that are going on in my life and I was going through some hard stuff with my career in moving and stuff like that and I just like poured it all out to her and she sat there and listened and like gave me really great advise but also just was a friend when I needed her so I think Hellen balances this aspect of being a teacher and a friend really really well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's great I think it's I don't know if easy is the right word but quite common for us in the martial arts to have mentors if you wanna use that word, people that we can look up to in that way because they train with us you know we're all engaged in sort of that same journey and you know and in Hellen's case of course I know her, she's a little but further down in her path chronologically, she knows she's got a few years on you so she can offer some perspective that you know we all like to talk to somebody from time to time that's a little bit older that can share things o I think that's great that you're got her.

Liza Jost:

I do too, I'm really lucky to have her in my life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, you've kinda answered the next question so I'll twist it we know you've done martial arts competition at least you've been to one so let's post the question a little bit differently, w2hat did you enjoy cause unfortunately now it's past tense what did you enjoy about martial arts competition and what did you take from it?

Liza Jost:

Well I still enjoy competition I mean I go to all of the competitions that I know. I love judging I love being a part of the leadership team and I love you know making a day special for other people and cheering on my friends and colleagues and stuff like that and I know it's really funny because when I was looking at this question I was like oh I don't even remember the first tournament I went to because I'm just I've been to so many that I remember the day my parents stopped coming because there was so many they



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were like okay we know how it's gonna go. I think it was I had just moved into the adult segment like the adult category of competition and they were like well it's gonna be like 8 hours before you compete. [00:22:40.10]

Jeremy Lesniak:

Give them the play by play by phone, right?

Liza Jost:

I was calling home with my medal, it's adorable though because my parents still in my childhood home have a whole wall of just every like board I was broking in college and all my medals for when I was kid and like my trophies and stuff. I even have.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, they were clearly much more supportive than you first made them sound.

Liza Jost:

Yeah no they're really supportive and they love it they just I think when I started competing the adult category and like I also drive myself there like oh it's 8 hours and we've got a lot of things to do and I love competition and I like I mentioned earlier the really cool thing about our circuit is [00:23:39.22] is like all the girls in my age group we had a there was I think there was 12 of us and between like 7 and 10 of us will always at each competition and we're all the same age and the same rank more or less and we became really good friends and like we go like glow bowling and like things you do as a teenager well I still like doing them now but after I

Jeremy Lesniak:

No go ahead

Liza Jost:

Yeah so it was just like I had this huge friends circle of girls my age and rank who love the same things I did and of course just click right away. So, I think that for me was always way more fun than actual competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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So, building that family in another direction you know your studio family and then your competition family, you just bring in people in to that circle of yours

Liza Jost:

Yeah yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay

Liza Jost:

I mean when you're a teenager you see it more it's just like yey people get me. They understand why you spend every afternoon after school like in this tiny little space.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Liza Jost:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, if you could train with anybody, if there was somebody that wasn't, that's not in your circle somebody any martial artist living or dead who would you pull in?

Liza Jost:

Oh, men is it too cheesy to say Bruce Lee?

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is not too cheesy. It's a common response so

Liza Jost:

Really?



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Tell us why maybe you have a different reason why.

Liza Jost:

I think Bruce Lee is just like the coolest martial artist ever and I mean there's probably people who are just as talented and just as dedicated but they haven't reached mass audiences and although I grew up watching Jackie Chan movies in the 90s and 2000s and I love Jackie Chan he was the coolest person I think as I got older I started appreciating older films more and like the martial arts aspects more over the comedy aspects and yeah I mean and then I also would really love to say a woman like I was thinking about that and I was like men there's gotta be there's so many like bad ass female martial artists out there but then again the only one I could think of that like I really sort of idolize as a kid was Michelle Yeoh from Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Liza Jost:

Like she is just is the coolest person ever

Jeremy Lesniak:

She's fantastic. Okay so you named a few movies in there, do you have a favorite martial arts movies?

Liza Jost:

Oh yeah, I guess I already went through that otherwise I think the best martial arts movie I know might be a little controversial although people might have other ideas but I think the best one I've ever seen is Ip man

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Liza Jost:

It's just so cool.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

We've had that mentioned a few times on this show so of course you know like always it'll be linked in the show notes how about a favorite martial arts actor, that could still be Bruce Lee but is it?

Liza Jost:

Yeah well, I don't yeah, I think like I was saying when I was a kid it was more towards Jackie Chan just because I thought he was the funniest thing ever but now I'd say Bruce Lee because his talent is just unrivaled I think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely, how about books, any martial arts books that you've read that you'd like to share with us?

Liza Jost:

I don't think so, I haven't really read any martial arts books to be honest. I have a copy of Taekwondo but the General Chio

Jeremy Lesniak:

General Chio's bible

Liza Jost:

Yeah, I have a copy of that at home but otherwise I don't actually have any martial arts books, sad to say.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay well maybe it's time to read some.

Liza Jost:

Yeah if so all my martial arts friends who are listening Christmas present this year.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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There you go, there you go and of course in other episodes we've talked about other books so you can listen to someone from the other episodes of the show and maybe you'll get some ideas.

Liza Jost:

I definitely will. I'm hesitating for making suggestions because there are some good ones that people have recommended that I have to go read you know it's like now once or twice a week as I'm doing these interviews my book list is growing. I'll have to make some more time for reading.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, any martial arts type of goals for the future something that you're really looking hard at wanting to make happen.

Liza Jost:

My biggest goal was always sorry my biggest goal was always to get my fourth-degree black belt my masters and I achieved that goal 2 years ago and it was really emotional day for me and I was just so grateful to be able to have that time because I think all good martial artists know that if you go away for a while and aren't training as much as you're used to it's difficult to get back into it. It's difficult to get your body back into shape, it's difficult to get your mindset back into making training a priority and I had a rare opportunity to do that last time I was home so that was really really big for me and now my goal is to just keep practicing until I get a chance to go home again. I've been to a lot of studios abroad and tried to train and I found it really difficult so I mainly train at home and I'm lucky because my partner he's also does martial arts so he and I can train together which is really great

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh cool

Liza Jost:

Yeah so, I think my goal right now is not so much in terms of rank I think it's more in terms of keeping up my scalability for basic movement and strength and things like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well that you know that might even be a harder goal cause as you've said you know you're away, you're away from your martial arts community and you're in school you don't have a schedule to say well



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maybe you do but you don't have a defined class time to go to the dojang and say I'm gonna train this place this time, cause that's easy to plan out.

Liza Jost:

Yeah exactly and [00:30:55.04] I'm incredibly small

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yes

Liza Jost:

So, practicing your patterns is difficult sometimes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can empathize, so that brings us to our last question, do you have any advice to sign off with for the people listening?

Liza Jost:

Yeah, I mean I don't want to sound too preachy or too

Jeremy Lesniak:

No preach on, this is your chance tell us what you think.

Liza Jost:

I really, I just gotta tell everybody out there that the biggest thing that I've learned to my training is you'll only ever get out of martial arts what you put into it so you have to train hard, you have to study hard and you have to love your martial arts family and you'll get it back 10 times over.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Very well said. Well cool Master Jost I wanna thank you for being here on [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). I really appreciate your time and I had a lot of fun interviewing you.

Liza Jost:



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Yeah, it's so much fun and I love your sparring gear.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well thank you, that was completely, you're not the first person to do that but I want people to know this is unprompted this is, the when people come on the show I don't tell them you have to say something about whistlekick no this is just.

Liza Jost:

But it's true.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And you mentioned it thank you and I appreciate that we're doing what we can.

Liza Jost:

Okay thank you so much for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I wanna thank you for listening to this episode of [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). A big thank you to Master Jost for sharing her story with me. Please be sure to subscribe to the show so you never miss one of our weekly episodes. If you do like the show we'd really appreciate a 5-star review on iTunes, stitcher, or wherever it is you download your podcasts. You can check out the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and while you're over there if you want to be a guest on the show or you know someone that would be a great addition please fill out the guest form. And of course, if you'd like to learn more about the quality sparring gear and other products we offer at whistlekick please check us out at whistlekick.com. Train hard smile and have a great day.